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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 9420
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS
NSC FOR WILDER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: DOUBLE SECRET LEGISLATION: THAI SECURITY ACT
PENDING?

REF: A. (BANGKOK 02855) A/S HILL'S MEETING WITH PRIME

MINISTER SURAYUD

[1](#)B. (BANGKOK 01754) THAILAND'S NEW SECURITY
STRUCTURE: BETTER LIVING THROUGH ISOC

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce. Reason 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) As of close of business on June 19, RTG officials were expected to announce that a draft Internal Security Act had been presented to the cabinet for debate. Speculation over the proposed bill has ebbed and flowed for months. Local press reported on June 17 that PM Surayud had instructed the National Security Council--which had drafted the bill--to present the act at the cabinet meeting this week. An MFA contact told us on June 19 that his organization was expecting the announcement of the draft law, and had been charged with "explaining it" to the foreign community--even though MFA has not even seen a copy of it yet.

[1](#)2. (C) Indeed, although we have heard for some time about the drafting of a new security law--PM Surayud mentioned it to Assistant Secretary Hill in a May 22 meeting (ref A), and a military contact raised the issue in March (ref B)--the specifics of this act remain unclear. While most observers expect that the new law will formally establish the form and functions of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), most of our contacts have denied any specific knowledge of the draft legislation. Members of the National Legislative Assembly contacted last week said that they had not been shown the document.

[1](#)3. (C) Such secrecy has inspired worried speculation that the bill will codify enhanced military power. One human rights contact, who claimed to have been briefed on the bill by an Army source, warned on June 19 that the security act will make ISOC "more powerful than the government," with wide powers of arrest and detention, similar to those provided under the Emergency Decree active in the insurgency-plagued South.

[1](#)4. (C) A senior Royal Thai Police (RTP) general previewed the draft legislation with the DCM late June 18. The RTP general related that it was discussed in detail with Council on National Security (CNS) leaders that morning. He assured the DCM that the law "would not be like martial law or an

emergency decree"; rather, it was designed to ensure that leaders of demonstrations "would have to take responsibility, under the law, for actions taken by demonstrators." The DCM urged that the police and CNS proceed cautiously, as it seemed to us that the authorities were able to maintain security without the need to enact additional legislation.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: While acknowledging the danger of commenting on a draft law that no one has seen, it is important to point out that the draft bill will still have to pass the legislature--which, while anemic is no rubber stamp-body--before becoming law. Even if the initial draft envisions expanded powers for the military, or its proxy, ISOC, this opening negotiating gambit is likely to be challenged by the press and public opinion.
BOYCE